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TODD MCFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

THEN ONE FOGGY CHRISTMAS EVE

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SLEEP?

TONIGHT?

NO WAY.

NOT WHEN THERE'S MAGIC IN THE AIR.

TONIGHT'S THE NIGHT.

HE'S COMING.

ALL THE WAY FROM THE NORTH POLE.

HIS SLEIGH LOADED-DOWN WITH GOODIES.

STAY AWAKE LONG ENOUGH, AND WHO KNOWS...?

MIGHT HEAR FOOTSTEPS...

OF EIGHT TINY REINDEER.

LANE
TION

FOLKS HAVEN'T RETURNED FROM THE CHRISTMAS EVE PARTY YET.

JEEZ. MAYBE...ITS HIM!

THEY FORBID ME TO GET OUT OF BED.

FORK

BUT YOU ONLY GET A CHANCE LIKE THIS ONCE A YEAR.

MAYBE IN YOUR WHOLE LIFE EVEN.

IF I DON'T ACT NOW THEN IT MIGHT BE...

...TOO LATE.

HE WAS HERE!

HE LEFT ALL THE PRESENTS.

AND NOW... HE'S GONE.

SO.

WHO'S TO KNOW IF I...?

FROM: SANTA

SNIFF

GAH!

SNUFFLE.

I DIDN'T OPEN IT!

I MEAN -- I DIDN'T MEAN TO... I...

IT WAS A MISTAKE!

MY HAND SLIPPED, I...

I'LL BE GOOD.

I'LL BE GOOD.

TWINKLEY TREE HOLD HAPPY GOOD MEMORY.

HAPPY GOOD MEMORY HIDE DEEP DEEP HURT INSIDE.

GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST.

HUMBUG? THIS IS MARLEY, TINY TIM'S MOVED INSIDE.

SHOULD WE CALL IN SCROOGE TO LEVEL THE JOINT WITH SIDEWINDERS?

NOT TONIGHT, MARLEY. MY RULE OF THUMB IS TO AVOID CHRISTMAS EVE MASSACRES NO MATTER HOW WELL WE CAN EXPLAIN THEM.

SIT TIGHT. BUT BE CAREFUL...

WE DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF VISIONS HE'S GOT DANCING IN HIS HEAD.

LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT OUR SIM THIS TIME, WARNER! WE'RE LUCKY HE WAS LOSING SO MUCH BLOOD.

THANK GOD YOU COULD FOLLOW HIS TRAIL UP THROUGH THE SEWERS AND FIND ME IN LUCIENNE'S CHAMBER OF HORRORS, MORT.

YEAH, FOR A FAMOUS ARTIST, THIS LUCIENNE SANGFROID GUY SURE WASN'T WRAPPED TOO TIGHT.

SO THIS BIRD WAS GOING TO MOUNT YOU IN LUCITE, BUT THE SIM BAILED YOU?

SORT OF. THE SIM WASN'T HELPING ME SO MUCH AS HE JUST DIDN'T LIKE LUCIENNE. FEAR OF DOCTORS, MAYBE...? I DUNNO.

HE SEEMED POSSESSED WITH A KIND OF MORAL OUTRAGE OR SOMETHING.

IT WAS INCREDIBLE TO WATCH HIM REBUILD HIMSELF FROM SPARE BITS AND PIECES.

I'M TELLING YOU, MORT -- THIS SIM IS EVERYTHING WE HOPED HE'D BE.

THE ULTIMATE MURDER MACHINE.

WELL, HE'S NO GOOD TO US UNLESS WE CAN CONTROL HIM.

IT'S A SHAME WE SCREWED UP HIS HUMAN-TO-APE RATIO IN THE PROGRAMMING PHASE. NOW WE'VE GOT A MONSTER WHO'S A TACTICAL GENIUS...

BUT TOTALLY UNPREDICTABLE.

AND WE'VE GOT OTHER PROBLEMS. REMEMBER THE DISTORTION FIELD BUOYS THAT CREATED THE DIMENSIONAL FOG AROUND NO MAN'S ARCHIPELAGO?

THE SKIPPER OF THE PT BOAT WENT BACK, BUT COULDN'T FIND THE UNIT YOUR GYPSY GIRLFRIEND PUT OUT OF COMMISSION.

GREAT. I'VE GOT A FEW BONES TO PICK WITH THAT LITTLE THIEF AND HER UNCLE.

YOU AND I NEED TO HAVE A LITTLE TALK ABOUT THOSE TWO, WARNER. RIGHT AFTER WE CLOSE THE VICE ON OUR SIM.

MARLEY? THIS IS HUMBUG. ANY SIGN OF TINY TIM?

MARLEY? YOU THERE?

HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON? I CAN HEAR VOICES...

AAAWGHH, JESUS...

GAAAWWWDD...

ARE YOU GUYS SINGING CHRISTMAS CAROLS?

OR DID YOU ALL DECIDE TO HANG IT UP AND GO DECORATE THE BARRACKS TREE?

I KNOW ITS LOUSY TO BE OUT THERE ON CHRISTMAS EVE, BUT YOU DON'T WANT TO TURN YOUR BACK ON THE SIM.

LIKE I TOLD YOU IN THE BRIEFING, HE'S NOT JUST A DUMB ANIMAL...

THERE'S A HUMAN BEING BURIED IN THERE SOMEWHERE...

MEWM?

MOM? I'VE GOT THE TREE ALL SET UP.

GOOD! LET'S START THE TRIMMING, MICHAEL! I'LL PUT THE CHRISTMAS MUSIC ON.

TOO BAD DAD'S NOT ALIVE TO SHARE THIS. IT'S A KONIECZNY TRADITION THAT GOES BACK TO THE OLD COUNTRY.

I WORRY I'LL LOSE YOU NEXT WITH THAT JOB OF YOURS.

BRIINNG

SRI DIGESU

HI, AL. EVERYTHING OKAY? YOU'RE KIDDING. THOSE BASTARDS. LISTEN, AL -- I MAY ONLY BE A CADET, BUT I'LL BACK YOU UP.

OH, MICHAEL. NOT THAT AWFUL SIMMONS MAN AGAIN. CAN'T YOU TELL HIM IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE?

MOM, AL SIMMONS IS THE ONLY DECENT MAN IN THE DEPARTMENT. HE'S IN A LOT OF TROUBLE WITH OUR BOSS.

IT'S LIFE OR DEATH. I'VE GOT TO HELP HIM.

WELL, IF IT'S THAT IMPORTANT... BUT JUST PROMISE ME ONE THING?

SAY YOU'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS?

PROMISE?

MEWWW.

MEW MEWW MEW.

♪HOME♪

♪OVER♪ ♪RIVER♪

♪THROUGH♪ ♪WOODS♪

♪GRANDMAMA'S♪ ♪HOUSE♪ ♪WE♪ ♪GO♪

♪COME♪ ♪THEY♪ ♪TOLD♪ ♪ME♪

♪PARUMPAPUMPUM♪

♪OH♪ ♪CHRISTMAS♪ ♪TREE♪

♪OH♪ ♪CHRISTMAS♪ ♪TREE♪

♪LOVELY♪ ♪ARE♪

♪YOUR♪ ♪BRANCHES♪

♪MAKIN' LIST♪

♪CHECKIN' IN TWICE♪

♪HEAVEN IN NATURE SING♪

♪HEAVEN IN NATURE SING♪

♪I SAW MOMMY KISSING SANTA CLAUS♪

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS♪

♪IS MY TWO FRONT TEETH♪

SILVER BELLS.

♪SILVER BELLS♪

DINGALING.♫

♪HEAR THEM RING♪

♪SOON IT WILL BE CHRISTMAS DAY!♪

GOD REST MERRY ♪GENTLEMEN,♪

♪NOTHING YOU ♪ DISMAY!♪

♪I'M DREAMING...♪

♪OF A WHITE...♪

♪CHRISTMAS.♪

MICHAEL?

♪I USED TO KNOW.♪

DIDN'T YOU REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE?

♪JUST LIKE THE ONES.

MICHAEL?

YOU SAID YOU'D BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS, MICHAEL.

♪NA! NA! NAAAGH!♪

HOW COULD YOU LIE TO ME, MICHAEL?

DON'T YOU KNOW THAT YOU BROKE YOUR MOTHER'S HEART?

EEEEE!

I GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...

COME ON. WE'RE DRIVING OVER THERE.

YOU THINK THE RANGERS ARE IN TROUBLE, MORT?

PROS LIKE THEM DON'T TURN TAIL AND RUN.

I WAS SURE TAKING ON PROJECT SIM WAS A GREAT CAREER MOVE. BUT IT'S COUGHED UP NOTHING BUT HAIRBALLS.

EVERY TIME WE THINK WE'VE TURNED ANOTHER CORNER...

WE HIT THE WALL!

THE LOOSE THREAD THAT REALLY SCARES ME IS THAT MISSING DISTORTION FIELD BUOY.

IF THE BIG BOYS EVER CONNECT US TO ITS DISAPPEARANCE, WE'RE SKINNED AND COOKED.

I MEAN, WE'RE TALKING ABOUT LOSING THE MOST TOP SECRET WEAPON IN THEIR WHOLE MIND CONTROL ARSENAL.

THOSE BUOYS GENERATE A DIMENSIONAL FOG THAT'S MORE HALLUCINOGENIC THAN TIM LEARY'S URINE SAMPLE.

AND OUR GUYS DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW IT WORKS!

UH, MORT? SPEAKING OF FOG...

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WHERE DID THIS PEA SOUP COME FROM?

IT'S THIS DAMNED EL NINO. GLOBAL WARMING, I KNOW? WEATHER PATTERNS CHANGE IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE!

JEESUS! WATCH WHERE TER GOIN', FER CRYING OUT LOUD! THIS IS A ONE-WAY--

YOU SEE THAT? HE JUST CAME OUTTA NOWHERE AND HIT ME!

THAT GUY WAS SCREAMING LIKE A LUNATIC! AND HE TOOK RIGHT OFF! OF ALL THE...

MORT -- MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T GET OUT HERE. I MEAN NO ONE CAN SEE US IN THIS FOG...

LOOK OUT!

AAAGH!

WE'VE GOT TO FIND OUR WAY OFF THE HIGHWAY BEFORE WE'RE GROUND INTO ROAD APPLES!

I'VE LOST ALL SENSE OF DIRECTION IN THE FOG! I CAN HEAR TIRES SCREECHING, BUT...

THOSE AREN'T TIRES, MORT. IT SOUNDS MORE LIKE...

SCREAMS?

PEOPLE SCREAMING. YES, I HEAR IT TOO, OR IS IT JUST A TRICK...

...OF OUR IMAGINATIONS?

WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON? ARE THEY FILMING A STAR WARS MOVIE HERE OR WHAT?

THOSE AREN'T IMPERIAL WALKERS, KIDDO...

WAIT --WAIT! DO YOU FEEL A LITTLE STRANGE? MAYBE IN A WAY YOU MIGHT HAVE FELT ONCE OR TWICE BEFORE?

NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, YEAH. MY STOMACH'S KIND OF FLUTTERY -- LIKE THE WHEN WE FLEW INTO NO MAN'S ARCHIPELAGO...

I SHOULD OF KNOWN! IT'S THE DISTORTION FIELD BUOY! IT MUST BE NEARBY AND STILL OPERATIONAL.

WE'RE SEEING THINGS. ANY PERSON CAUGHT IN THE FOG, INCLUDING US, IS EXPERIENCING ACUTE HALLUCINATIONS.

THEY'RE THE THREE KINGS OF THE ORIENT!

B-BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! IT'S JUST... CRAZY!!

WE'RE ALL TRAPPED IN OUR OWN PERSONAL VERSION OF NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS!

HAD TO BE A DREAM.

SURE. THAT'S ALL IT WAS.

DIDN'T THINK I FELL ASLEEP, BUT...

NO WAY IT COULD HAVE BEEN A REAL... Y'KNOW...MONSTER.

FOLKS STILL AREN'T HOME.

I WONDER IF HE'S BEEN HERE?

SOMEONE BROUGHT THE PRESENTS, JUST LIKE I DREAMED.

BUT--WHO TORE THE LIGHTS FROM THE TREE?

MAYBE IT WAS... THE MONSTER?

NO. NO WAY. THERE ARE NO MONSTERS.

HE WOULDN'T LET THERE BE MONSTERS.

NOT TONIGHT.

UNLESS...

WELL...MAYBE HE KNOWS I GOT OUT OF BED WHEN MY PARENTS FORBID IT AND...Y

HE?!

SO...

YOU BEEN COOD?

THE BIG MAN WANTS TO KNOW!!

YEAH! IT'S A BIG JOB TO KEEP TABS ON LITTLE SNOT-NOSES LIKE YOU!

DON'T THINK YOU CAN LIE TO THE BIG MAN EITHER!

HE'S GOT WAYS OF GETTING THE TRUTH OUT OF YOU!

TONIGHT IT IS OUR SACRED DUTY BEFORE THE DIVINE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY ON HIGH...
TO ESTABLISH, BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT, IF THE ACCUSED WRETCH, BROUGHT BEFORE THIS COURT OF INQUISITION...
...HAS INDEED BEEN NAUGHTY OR NICE.
NOOOOOO!

LOOKS LIKE SANTA'S COME EARLY FOR YOU AND ME, WARNER!

FINDING THE DISTORTION FIELD BUOY IS GOING TO GO A LONG WAY TO SOLVING OUR PROBLEMS WITH THE BIG BOYS.

HOW DID YOU FIGURE OUT WHERE IT WOULD BE, MORT?

IT'S A BUOY, RIGHT? HAD TO BE SOMEWHERE HERE ON THE WATER'S EDGE!

LOOK AT THIS. HOT WIRED TO THE BOAT'S ELECTRICAL SYSTEM. WHO'D HAVE BELIEVED IT?

PROBLEM SOLVED. AS SOON AS THE FOG DISSIPATES EVERYONE IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA WILL BE BACK TO NORMAL.

NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF THEM WILL WAKE UP TOMORROW THINKING THEY ATE TOO MUCH FRUIT CAKE!

YOU DON'T THINK THE BIG BOYS WILL WANT TO SEND US TO SIBERIA FOR THIS HOWLER?

NOT IF WE SPIN IT IN OUR DIRECTION. THEY'LL GET THEIR PIECE BACK. THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT.

WE'LL JUST NEED TO CONVINCE THEM WE'RE THE SONS-O-BITCHES THAT FOUND IT.

INSTEAD OF THE DOUCHEBAGS WHO LOST IT IN THE FIRST PLACE?

NOW YOU'RE LEARNIN', SON.

BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, YOU'LL BE GUNNIN' FOR MY JOB.

I DON'T KNOW, MORT. I'M BEGINNING TO THINK I'M NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS LINE OF WORK.

MAYBE I SHOULD JUST BAG IT BEFORE I GET IN TOO DEEP.

DON'T KID YOURSELF, WARNER. YOU ALREADY GOT BOTH HANDS STUCK IN UP TO THE ELBOWS IN THIS TAR BABY.

AND QUITTING THE AGENCY ISN'T REALLY AN OPTION, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

BUT, HEY-- IT'S CHRISTMAS. WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO TALK OF SUCH THINGS.

I GOTTA PUT A CALL IN TO MY SECRETARY...

HI, SARAH. SORRY TO WAKE YOU UP. YUP. YUP. NOPE. WE GOT A SITUATION IN LOWER MANHATTAN. YEAH. WE'RE GOING TO NEED EVERYONE ASAP.

YUP, YUP, I KNOW WHAT DAY IT IS, BUT LIKE I SAID... WE'VE GOT A SITUATION. YEAH. I'VE SET MY BEEPER. JUST TELL THEM TO FOLLOW THE SIGNAL.

SAY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO RALPH AND THE TWINS FOR ME. YUP. YUP. BYE.

CRISIS TEAM'S ON THE WAY. ANYTHING YOU AND I NEED TO GO OVER BEFORE THEY ARRIVE?

NOTHING IMPORTANT, MORT. HEH! I TELL YA', I GET MORE EXCITED ABOUT PROJECT SIM EVERY DAY!

I MEAN, WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A GUY JUST STARTING OUT IN THE BUSINESS, Y'KNOW? HEH HEH.

GOOD! YOU KNOW, WARNER, THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYES ON YOU I KNEW YOU HAD THE RIGHT STUFF.

SON -- YOU GOT THE MAKINGS OF A TOP NOTCH UNDER COVER MAN!

SLEEP?

TONIGHT?

NO WAY.

SON OF ULTRON